

**War - Time
Highway**



**Transportation
Restrictions**

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Loss of Automobiles Would Be Calamitous

"* * * We long ago passed in this country clean out of the horse and buggy era into the automotive vehicle era, and our economy and ways of life are so closely linked to and interwoven with those rubber-borne, gasoline-consuming vehicles that the results will be calamitous if we lose their services in any large part." (*Address of Joseph B. Eastman, Director of the Office of Defense Transportation, before the Midwest Farm Bureau Conference, Madison, Wisconsin, July 21, 1942*).

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War-Time Highway Transportation Restrictions



Wheels, wings, munitions, equipment and raw materials are five most important factors in winning this war.

Wheels must be shod with rubber tires, wings must be powered with high octane gasoline; munitions must be made in amounts heretofore undreamed of; equipment must come from our war plants in unprecedented numbers; and the raw materials must be provided for every aspect of the war and for the maintenance of civilian living and productivity.

In all this the wings are now so numerous and so effective as to far exceed even our imagination of only a few months ago. No scarcity of war munitions confronts the nation as a result of the production of gigantic facilities. War equipment of many kinds is pouring out of converted war plants in a phenomenal way. Raw materials from the farms of the country, from the mines and from the factories reach almost astronomical proportions, and these are being supplemented by salvage campaigns.

A Transportation Deficiency

There is a deficiency in wheels; a deficiency in transportation generally; a lack of as much energy in providing the nation with adequate rubber for the motor vehicles of the country as is visible on every hand in providing other essentials for the conduct of the war.

In fact, it may be said that at Washington transportation as a whole has not yet received its proper evaluation as a factor in winning the war. It sometimes appears from statements that originate in official circles at Washington that transportation, whether by motor vehicles or otherwise, is an incident rather than an implement of war; sometimes a hindrance rather than a help to the great objective.

Not many months ago casual words were heard at Washington that pipe lines, now serving as an efficient transportation medium, might well be torn up so that the metal could be used for other war purposes. More recently, however, metal has been found and priorities issued for building more pipe lines rather than the destruction in part of those in operation.

Eighteen months ago representatives of railroads said that they would need more rolling stock to do

the work of transportation in the year of defense efforts prior to the war and in war if it should follow. Certain priorities were issued for rolling stock; but the railroads down to date have found it difficult to equip themselves to handle the extra load that has been thrown upon them. Many planes have been deflected from civilian to military uses, which cannot be criticized; but the comment can be offered that in doing so a stringency was created in the transportation mechanism of the nation.

Transportation and Production

New buses and trucks, and parts therefor, have been greatly reduced for general use; and automobile making has descended almost to a defunct status.

These and other developments of recent months are referred to not in the attitude of fault finding, but in an analysis which brings the thought that the statement of a number of organizations sent to public officials in Washington months ago that transportation is as important as production and should be represented in the membership of War Production Board, has not yet permeated official thought at Washington. The most notable deficiency in transportation, which deficiency is a primary cause of the war-time transportation restrictions, at the present time is rubber. If the wheels on the motor vehicles of this nation quit rolling for lack of rubber that occurrence will not be a mere incident; it will be a calamity. *Motor transportation serves a large purpose in keeping the economy of this great nation moving. And it may be said further that the economy of this great nation cannot be wholly upset or rearranged without dire effects on the military front.*

We must not forget that wars are won or lost on the home front as often as on the battle front.

Look Homeward, Washington

Local business is the basis of national business; and is the foundation of national security and prosperity. Transportation adequate to supply local business with its requirements is furnished largely by motor vehicles.

Necessity trips of the passenger automobile (used in most families as the equivalent of a light truck) greatly predominate, it has been ascertained by an accurate national survey. The great majority of trips are local; the mileage of these trips is not so important (great or small as that factor may be) as is the fact that the trips must be made. These trips in the main are for a few miles only; out and back, to and from work, to and from town for marketing purposes and such essential driving. *These*

utility or necessity trips are 77 per cent of the total of all trips of the passenger car. This 77 per cent of passenger car utility trips breaks down further into 30 per cent for business purposes, 33 per cent going to or returning from work, 14 per cent for shopping, hauling, going to church and to school.

Ninety-five per cent of all passenger cars of the nation are used partly or wholly on necessary trips, leaving only 5 per cent of the total automobiles as non-essential—or as ordinarily stated, "pleasure cars."

These statistics naturally cause one to ask, "What is pleasure driving, anyway, that we bear must be dispensed with?" If 77 per cent of total automobile use is necessity driving and 95 per cent of all passenger cars are used wholly or in part in necessity driving, are they to be eliminated from the transportation scene because of that small percentage of total use which is called pleasure driving?

Too much accent has been placed on the so-called pleasure driving of automobiles and too little on the utility and necessity use of these vehicles. When the first impact of the war astounded the nation, and our supply of natural rubber was almost wholly cut off, the air was filled with doleful prophecies that every automobile—or the most of them—would have to be laid up for the duration, and longer. Some not-so-doleful prophets let the nation know that in their considered opinions, no more than twenty million automobiles would have to be junked for the duration. After weeks and months of this earrending wailing at the wall of transport obstacles the atmosphere of pessimism cleared away; calmness of judgment prevailed; and now it is quite generally recognized that at least twenty million passenger cars must be kept in operation instead of that number being immobilized.

Regarding buses and trucks it may be said, without submitting statistical proof, that practically every trip is one of utility.

To restrict motor vehicles unnecessarily would be equivalent to reducing the nation's opportunity to achieve an early victory.

Restrictions Can't Win

It is a safe statement to make that we cannot win this war on the basis of restrictions. That procedure, however, is too much in evidence at the present time in relation to transportation. Obviously, some restrictions in time of war—lesser proportions in time of peace—are necessary. But if restrictions or regulations are carried to extreme they throttle the economy of the nation without which no war can be won.

Obviously these regulations and restrictions of transportation tracing to causes and objectives other than the rubber shortage, are more evidently unavoidable and will be more cheerfully tolerated by public opinion.

Instead of driving directly to the heart of existing motor vehicle problems and securing adequate supplies of rubber for our war needs, those of our Allied Nations, and the essential civilian requirements in war-time transportation—eliminating joy riding and all unnecessary mileages—we find at Washington and throughout the country many restrictive regulations. Many of these would not be necessary if we as a nation would cope with the transportation problems of the day as their merit and importance demand. We need to realize, even if belatedly, that *a nation without transportation is a nation on the way to defeat; and that production without transportation is futile.*

Radius of Operation

Some of the restrictions applying to vehicular transportation are indicative of efforts to solve the transportation problem of the nation by restraint. For instance, the War Department, ostensibly to save rubber, not many weeks ago was reported ready to issue an edict that so far as the business of the War Department is concerned, a truck on the roads of America would be limited to a 300-mile haulage. This dictum was considered by the War Department quite in contravention of the nation-wide clamor that all highway barriers should be eliminated. The governors of the states, the administrators in the states, highway user organizations all over the nation, the Secretary of Commerce, the President of the United States, all have joined hands recently after ten years of exposure of the iniquity of transportation barriers to remove such barriers.

Now comes along the War Department about to express its departmental determination to have as many highway barriers as there are trucks starting from points of origin, on radii of 300 miles describing circles from innumerable points of origin. That would create such a multiplicity of barriers as this nation never heretofore has seen; worse would they be than state line barriers simply because they would be so infinitely more numerous.

But public opinion, governmental opposition from other agencies and even within the War Department, and the exposure of the final results of such a procedure have caused the War Department to withhold its order. Why would it not have been more reasonable to have devoted the great power and authority of the War Department to support of efforts to secure an adequate supply of synthetic

rubber rather than in the guise of saving rubber to attempt to do an unwise thing, not to highway transportation, but to *highway transportation as an essential factor in winning the war?*

Any effort from any source that endeavors to limit the radius of operation of any motor vehicles in these times of war is contrary to the public interest and is an obstruction to the war enterprise. How easy it would be to make unnecessary such unreasonable efforts to solve the motor transportation problem if only we would proceed to the heart of the situation by getting more rubber. To restrict highway transportation serving the war enterprise is equivalent to *trying to win the war on the basis of restrictions.*

Innumerable instances could be given of repercussions of governmental restrictions on the economy of the nation and eventually on the war enterprise. The nation is now filled with restrictions and regulations of tires. These are necessary, of course, if we are to try to make tires for the whole war from our present stocks of rubber, and not get any new stocks synthetically. But if we get a vast expansion of our synthetic rubber production and get it quickly the tire restrictions can be, not wholly but in their aggravating characteristics, eliminated. But we at Washington appear to be largely content to win the war so much as highway transportation can help win it, by restricting tire use, surrounding every tire with innumerable regulations governing its use, its replacement, its repair; instead of energetically and with great determination moving straight forward towards supplying this nation with a synthetic rubber industry the equal of which no country has ever enjoyed.

A Farmer and His Tires

Individuals almost without number could be cited to show the aggravations resulting from, and the unnecessary features of, such restrictions and regulations. A farmer in Mississippi writes that in the operation of a tractor a hole was snagged in one of the big rear casings. In the spirit of conservation of rubber, which every owner should observe, this farmer decided to have the casing vulcanized rather than to apply for a new one. He spent five dollars on telegrams and telephone calls; it took him ten days to get official and other approval in regard to the vulcanizing job. Living within fifty miles of Memphis, Tennessee, he was unable to get any clearance for the work in that city; had to send the casing 320 miles to Birmingham, Alabama; all of which kept the tractor, at a particularly crucial period of his productive year, idle for one-third of a month.

On June 1 this same farmer applied to his county rationing board for two casings for the front wheels

of his tractor. On June 29 he received the casings for which he had applied one month previously.

If the nation does not equip itself with wheels adequately shod with rubber the troubles of this farmer in this year will be nothing in relation to those which he and all other users of motor vehicles will face in 1943. At that time it is feared the economy of the nation will begin to break down because of transport congestion. We will then realize what faces us and will hasten to correct the situation, and perhaps will spend billions of dollars in doing so. *A representative democracy, it may be suggested, cannot transform itself into a war camp unless at the same time sustenance for the war enterprise is provided by the folks back home; and transportation is a most important factor in providing such sustenance.*

The 75 Per Cent Back Haul

In the meantime, because of the slowness in producing synthetic rubber the effort to "save" transportation, and to conserve rubber in so doing, goes on apace by regulation and by restriction, attempted or actual.

One of the most ludicrous attempts to restrict truck transport and conserve rubber during recent months was the announced requirement that all trucks—or at least most trucks—must come back with a 75 per cent load or not go out. That order, had it gone into effect, would have been the death knell of private trucking and of much for-hire trucking. Publication of the order aroused such a protest from many highway and public spirited groups that its date of operation was postponed; and postponed again; and eventually, in the wisdom that characterizes the official actions of ODT Director Eastman, was greatly modified to provide that operators must use due diligence in seeking return loads.

Those in Director Eastman's Office of Defense Transportation official family who first endorsed this plan to conserve rubber and to "save" transportation evidently gave little consideration to harmful and disrupting aspects of the proposed order. Apparently they neglected to consider that not alone the conservation of rubber on hand—essential and necessary as that is—but the securing quickly of a large new supply of rubber synthetically, is the main problem.

Swap Rides

It is not to be inferred, however, that all efforts to cope with the rubber shortage, prior to the manufacture of synthetic rubber in large annual tonnage, are untimely or unnecessary. The "swap-ride" pro-

gram deserves every support, and is now making satisfactory progress. It would be a good procedure for all of us to practice what is now being presented in this well-planned undertaking.

Sugar Rationing, Transportation, Local Economy

Speaking further about the unexpected and unforeseen result of governmental restrictions and regulations which no one out in the farms and in the towns of the nation or at the administrative desks in Washington can foresee, reference may be made to sugar rationing. Down in the Carolinas a development may be cited which is typical of the whole nation. Sugar is rationed to the manufacturers of soft drinks. With that situation as a starting point, let us notice the developing economic impacts of sugar rationing for soft drinks. Since the manufacturer has a limited supply of sugar he produces a limited supply of soft drinks; he sells this limited supply in a lesser radius from his plant than he heretofore has covered; then more distant places do not get soft drinks; consequently, they cease to buy ice; as a further consequence those who transport ice eliminate these outlying places because there is not enough business to warrant their continuing their deliveries of ice; and as a further continuing consequence farmers cannot get ice to preserve their milk for their own use and for delivery to processing plants; and as a final consequence—unexpected as it may be when the sugar rationing first was promulgated—the *economics of the community are upset in a very unfortunate manner*. Again in this case, somewhat in contravention of tendencies at Washington, it may be reasonably stated that sugar rationing, which has some relationships to transportation restrictions, would hardly have been thought of (except by visionaries who believe that all governmental problems can be handled in the regulatory manner) if years ago this nation had devoted itself to producing an adequate amount of sugar for its own uses.

The Hatchery-Man and His Tires

In relation to the baby chick industry, the shortage of tires; the attitude too prevalent at Washington that we must make the present supply of rubber last through the war, and if synthetic rubber is made it will be produced only in years so far distant as to be ineffective in the present situation; all brings this industry face to face with tires and vehicular restrictions and regulations. These would be largely unnecessary—just to the extent that the nation wakes up to the fact that synthetic rubber

can be made into tires and tubes. If speed is put into the enterprise, what with conservation of rubber and salvaging all the scrap rubber that can be found, the cause for most of these restrictions will have been eliminated.

The Source of Highway Troubles

No one need state that these rulings are easy to understand, easy to administer; or that they can be wholly eliminated in these times of war, no matter how well supplied the nation might be with rubber. But these regulations relative to the baby chick industry are samples of the multitudinous ones which necessarily originate at Washington under present conditions. In regard to highway transportation, the source of troubles which afflict motor vehicle operations is not being sought energetically enough. That source largely revolves around the securing of synthetic rubber in 1943, not in 1944 or 1945, in quantities adequate to supply every essential war-time need of the United States, every essential war-time need of our Allied Nations that they cannot supply from their own sources of rubber, and every essential war-time need of civilian motor transportation in the United States.

It does not suffice to say that we do not know all there is to know about synthetic rubber. That is true. Neither do we know all there is to know about natural rubber. The chemists every year, almost every month, were discovering new possibilities in relation to natural rubber. And, phenomenally, chemists are now discovering that a product which we usually call synthetic rubber—although it is, not rubber—can be made; and made in quantities sufficient to equip the wheels of the nation so that they, along with the wings, the munitions, the general war equipment and the raw materials will be more adequately prepared to carry their burdens in the war enterprise.

Some Comparisons

When President Roosevelt months ago said we were going to build tanks and airplanes in unprecedented numbers it is safe to state that neither he nor the manufacturers of these vehicles knew just what kinds of tanks and airplanes were going to be built. The tanks being turned out now are not the same type of tanks that were turned out six months ago. But we did not sit around wringing our hands twelve or eighteen months ago because at that time we did not know all about the building of tanks. The same may be said of airplanes; about cargo ships; about battleships which are now going

through a process of great change—in equipment both inside and outside. But there are those who are of the doubting-Thomas type and perhaps because they know little about synthetic rubber, take the position that the nation can produce only small dribbles of this very essential commodity. The fact of the matter is, *synthetic rubber is so far along in its practicability, its durability, its reasonable cost, as to be on a par with any of the other essential war materials* which are now pouring out of the war plants all over the nation.

How Much; How Soon

Eight hundred thousand tons of synthetic rubber in some far distant year will be largely inadequate. That tonnage must be increased beyond a million tons each year so long as the war lasts. We must not forget that not alone our ordinary civilian uses are now to be supplied; other great uses must be provided with rubber before the essential civilian requirements are to be satisfied. If the estimated military requirements for rubber are more than necessary, cut them down, both in the United States and in the Allied Nations; and these requirements have been cut down. If essential civilian requirements for synthetic rubber are greater in relation to keeping the economy of the nation in a healthy condition than has recently been recognized, increase the quantity of synthetic rubber to be produced each year to avoid congestion of transportation to the great detriment of the entire war enterprise.

The amount of synthetic rubber that this nation needs each year or for the entire war effort is not a fixed quantity; more properly, it is a variable quantity, no doubt increasing each year until the war ends with victory for the Allied Nations. Anyone in the government or outside who says that a certain annual tonnage is enough; or is all that can be produced; or is all that can be produced in relation to other materials, speaks quite beside the point—the point being to win the war.

All Sources and Processes

Anyone who says that synthetic rubber should be produced only from one source of raw material—grain, petroleum, coal—likewise speaks inadvisedly; for synthetic rubber can be started chemically, in its processes of manufacture from all of these products. Costs may differ a bit; time of mass production may vary; but quarreling should cease concerning one process being in every way superior to all others.

We have heard and read much in recent weeks about various processes for making synthetic rub-

ber. Strange words are being incorporated in our lexicon of current events. Buna, butyl, neoprene, butadiene, styrene, thiokol, flexon, catalytic, alcohol; these are in part the words that apply to chemicals and processes used in the infant synthetic rubber industry of the nation. *Not one alone, but all should be used to the extent of their already demonstrated practicability.*

Metals and Synthetics

It is no longer acceptable for agents and officials of government to repeat the expression which has already been heard too many times that we have not enough raw materials to build and equip synthetic rubber plants. We heard that same argument in regard to pipe lines; but when the need for more pipe lines became so evident that no one could conceal it; and when the public became aroused on the matter, materials were authorized for use in building pipe lines. When the citizen who wants to contribute his help in winning the war by continuing to use motor transportation for essential operations, comes face to face with the assertion from Washington that he must choose between rubber and battleships because both require metals, he is inclined to pause. But no such choice, no such alternative decision, confronts him. Synthetic rubber production will not stop the outpouring of tanks, airplanes, cargo ships and battleships. But even if its production did in an infinitesimal way take more materials from these other necessary war enterprises the nation would be better served by so doing than to stagnate motor transportation to the detriment of the entire economy. *Rubber is now definitely a war commodity and must be provided.*

So the citizen individually and in his organization need not fear the threat hurled at him sometimes from Washington, that no or little material is available for synthetic rubber production.

Conversion and Creation

It was essential in properly and adequately equipping this great peace loving nation for war purposes, to convert some of our industries into the production of war-time materials. This task has been done so thoroughly as to be practically completed in the opinions of many competent observers. Much dislocation and dismay have resulted to business both big and small. No one is foolhardy enough to say that the job should not have been done.

But in recent weeks evidences are appearing in official circles at Washington, as well as in public thinking, that the job if continuously expanded

would exceed the ability of civilian business to support.

Seemingly there is a developing public thought that the federal government might well turn some attention to creation of new and needed civilian businesses as well as expanded opportunities for businesses already operating, as balancing and complimentary factors to offset costs of the colossal war plant until victory is achieved.

New Industries Now

Right here let it be said that if materials, particularly steel, are so scarce that the essential war-time enterprises cannot function other than those which were first started eighteen months ago, then the nation needs to hestir itself and enlarge the steel production of the country. That production has not reached a zenith in daily, monthly or annual tonnages. It may be said, with wisdom, that *instead of restricting, circumscribing, hindering the business and the industry of the nation in order to accomplish the necessary equipping of the nation for war purposes it would be well for us as a nation to establish new industries right now rather than wait for that much-lauded post-war period for which a lot of people at Washington and elsewhere are now planning. We had better win the war before we indulge in too much post-war planning.* Let us plan to win the war; and if that plan requires the creation or the expansion of industries let us get at that task.

Natural, Reclaimed and Synthetic Rubber

Little reliance can be placed on natural rubber from any source during the war; especially if the war, unfortunately, should last several years. All of that is wiped off the calendar of rubber supply prospects. We have rubber stocks on hands larger than ordinary but not large enough to take us through the war. We have more than the usual amount of *reclaimed rubber added to materially by the recent successful rubber drive.* That drive secured in excess of 454,155 tons of scrap rubber, which is more than the nation heretofore has been using each year. One may reasonably estimate that the rubber secured during the drive plus that now in the junkyards of the nation gives an eighteen months' supply of reclaimed rubber.

But the nation cannot continue indefinitely with highway transportation as a vital factor in winning the war by making over and over its present stocks of rubber. A new and additional stock must be secured, quickly, and in large tonnages. The only way to do that is to build plants to make butadiene, to make styrene, to make alcohol, to make any of the

constituent chemicals that are necessary in the manufacture of the final product, synthetic rubber. Then we must make that product by using any, or all, the processes and formulae that are known to be efficient.

New discoveries are being made almost every day; steps to perfect the processes which are already known to be efficient in producing synthetic rubber are the rule rather than the exception. It is now permissible to state that on account of these recent developments a plant originally blue-printed for a certain annual tonnage might far exceed that tonnage. It is not improbable that the nation may be pleasantly surprised with a greater production of synthetic rubber—whenever the enterprise really gets started—than the normal plant capacity would seem to indicate.

A Rubber Czar

That the public is confused on this issue of synthetic rubber is not surprising with more than fifteen federal agencies some way or another having their official fingers in the rubber pie. These agencies lack coordination, and are handing out statements, press releases and pronouncements which are as far apart, each from the others, in their intent and direction as are the poles. At Washington "confusion worse confounded" reigns supremely as the order of the day regarding synthetic rubber. That confusion may be expected to disappear as the nation which is already synthetic rubber conscious, and Congress which is annoyed at the situation, begin to bring their influences to bear upon the administrative agencies of the government, charged with prime responsibility for this project.

Inevitably, if the confusion continues, a rubber czar must be appointed to secure more speed in decision to go ahead; to enlarge the original project to fit the later developments; and to become positive rather than negative in regard to the entire enterprise.

The Team of Public Opinion and Congress

Until the public and Congress began to demand that something be done about the rubber problem other than the fatalistic attitude that nothing much could be done about it, the trend had been to take more and more rubber from the civilians with seemingly little regard to the effect ultimately, or soon, on the national economy. Now there is a turn in the tide of these events. Washington in its administrative circles is at last beginning to give consideration to getting more rubber to civilians for essential war-time highway transportation.

Both Houses of Congress are wide awake on this matter, a condition traceable to the general broad knowledge of the members of Congress relative to public events and public problems as well as the close relations between Congress and public opinion. The administrative agencies and agents are further removed from public opinion than are members of Congress. These agents and agencies, the regulators of many an activity of the daily life of our citizens, have jobs to do and they do them in the ways which look most expedient to themselves. In doing this in their own ways they may inadvertently and with the best intentions possible, do things that are diametrically opposed to the principles and practices of representative democracy for which we are fighting this war.

Public opinion in war times and in peace times (if a representative democracy is what all citizens think it is) is the most powerful factor in government. Public opinion, reflecting its demands through Congress, gradually is bringing administrative Washington to a realization of these things:

1. That the war-time enterprises are based on the maintenance of the civilian economy of the nation;
2. That there is a point where further conversion of business and industry into war enterprises becomes a weakening rather than a strengthening factor;
3. That the problems of the war cannot wholly be solved by restrictions;
4. That the problems of the war must be solved where necessary by the establishment of new enterprises rather than by the regulatory restriction or extermination of the businesses we now have;
5. That one of the most important of these new businesses which we must create is the production of synthetic rubber in tonnages beyond one million a year with a peak of production not later than 1943.

(NOTE: Since this address was delivered the War Production Board has increased the synthetic rubber program from 800,000 tons to 870,000 tons annually.)

America Must Have Rubber

"America wants rubber. America must have rubber. The United Nations must have rubber. We must have the rubber quickly. We must have the rubber in amounts sufficient for our war needs and sufficient to maintain on a reasonably productive basis all our essential industries. We have supplies from which this rubber can be made. We have these supplies in tremendous quantities. We have the processes with which these supplies can be translated into rubber. We have the engineering and technical skill to put these processes into production. What possible excuse can there be for failure to meet this indisputable need?" (*Radio address, July 20, 1942, by Senator Guy M. Gillette (D., Iowa).*)